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SOURCE Neue Zuercher Zeitung.REORGANIZE RETAIL TRADE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The socialization of retail trade in Czechoslovakia, introduced at the beginning of 1950, can now be considered complete. Only in isolated cases are stores still under private ownership; most have been taken over by either the state or cooperatives. In connection with the radical new order issued in September 1951 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and passed by the Council of Ministers, thousands of employees were transferred from white-collar to productive jobs. The largest consumer cooperative does not seem to be affected by the reform, but in it, also, extensive changes of personnel are in progress. Other cooperatives, such as the railroad restaurateurs' cooperative, are being transformed into national enterprises.

The socialization of domestic consumer trade began in 1945 with the confiscation of the property of the Germans and of the Czechoslovaks who had been convicted of collaboration. It was continued in 1948, when the state took over all plants with more than 50 employees. In the beginning of 1950, an intensive campaign was undertaken to persuade store owners either to transfer their property completely to a state enterprise, in which case they would be employed in the same or in a similar enterprise, or to join voluntarily a cooperative which would continue to employ them as executives and pay them a modest rent. Thus far, in both cases, the previous owners have been transferred to other stores or have been sent into heavy industry as laborers. Only in exceptional cases where the individual suffered hardship through no fault of his own was there a cash payment, since the creation of a new class of nonworking capitalists was to be avoided.

The Ministry of Internal Trade will direct its activity less and less toward matters of government (drafting new laws and similar matters) and more and more toward the management of domestic trade. Purchasing is the only function to be carried out by large enterprises. For sales to consumers, independent plants are to be organized in the various districts. Up to now, many a national enterprise has had to run several thousand retail stores and several hundred

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storage rooms. This will not be the case under decentralization, the main purposes of which are to improve the service to the working customer, and to reduce administration, the number of administrative employees, and office space.

On 1 October 1951, the existence of all but two state firms engaged in domestic trade was ended. The VDP (Velkodrusztevni Prodejny, Wholesale Cooperative Outlets) and the Center for the Management of Agricultural Products, which handles the purchasing of all agricultural products, are also being liquidated. In the Ministry of Internal Trade, nine central administrations are being set up: for purchase from the producer, for the food trade, for hotels and restaurants (excluding communal hotels and restaurants), for clothing (textiles and leather products), for household and office needs, and for miscellaneous requisites (including warehouses); as well as ministerial central administrations for watches, jewelry, and antiques; for used clothing and second-hand articles; and for construction materials. These nine directorates replace the central directorates of 28 former large-scale firms.

In the food trade, in place of one large-scale state firm (Pramen in the Czech Provinces, Zdroj in Slovakia), 136 regional firms are substituted, all of which will continue to carry the designation Pramen or Zdroj. State-owned hotels, up to now centrally administered, are assigned to seven regional enterprises. An independent enterprise will take care of the dining and sleeping cars on the state railroads. The sales outlets of the chemical and paper industry, as well as the warehouses, are grouped together according to okres, under the direction of the ministry.

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